



Into the Light

All things are possible with God
January—February 2020

And I Will be Clean

- Revisited -

By Bob Van Domelen

Note: This article was originally written in 2001. Recently, a number of you have written to ask that I do an article on temptation, so I looked at what I had already done for this newsletter and this one fits well. As usual, when I do a revisited article, I will add some current thoughts at the end.

Surely you desire truth in the inner part; you teach me wisdom in the inmost places. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
(Psalm 51:6-7)

A few weeks ago, I saw a commercial advertising cleanser guaranteed to eliminate the most disgusting stains. To prove the point, the advertiser showed viewers scenes of sinks, showers, and toilet bowls literally crusty with incredible layers of filth. A single application of the product, however, removed *all* traces of dirt, leaving shiny, white surfaces.

Just days after seeing that commercial, I received a few letters from inmates, and the content of their letters reminded me of that product. Each person shared a deep desire to find freedom from unwanted fantasies—fantasies which stood in the way of change or which might weaken their resolve in some way.

Surely you desire truth in the inner part

In a very practical sense, truth for the molester is that children do *not* choose to be sexually molested. They seek protective love, encouragement, and nurturing. What they received from us was a carnal appetite disguised as love and a betrayal of the trust they had a right to expect.

Distorted Truth

There are a few adults who honestly believe that some children are just sexually precocious. This thinking allows them to pursue their desires without feelings of guilt but it is a false intimacy they seek. The sexual awareness level between adult and child can never be equal. If there is any truth at all in these situations, it would be that there is a physical pleasure possible. Sadly, for the child it would be a pleasure shrouded in confusion, plagued by self-doubt, and sealed with a growing alienation from his or her peers. This last statement is indeed truth, but a very pain-filled truth.

You teach me wisdom in the inmost places

For many in prison, participation in treatment, chapel services, Bible studies, as well as a forced separation from past, present, and future victims is the foundation of this new wisdom. In my own walk, an ongoing and deepening

relationship with God still makes those opportunities possible and desirable. Contrary to the opinion some hold that a focus on God is a form of denial, I have found it to be just the opposite. Choosing God brings me face to face with accountability to myself and accountability to others.

All of this is prelude to the basic question I was asked in those letters about the possibility of change, but it is necessary that I share what I have shared so far as a foundation for the answer.

Questions

“What about those unwanted thoughts? Will they ever stop crowding into my life like some unwanted virus?”
Maybe.

I hope that you aren’t disappointed with my answer, because even though I wanted to give you a definite and resounding YES, I couldn’t do that. It hasn’t happened in my life so far nor in the lives of most who write me. But there *has* been change, and how I respond to those unwanted images has been a major part of that change.

Every person IS different!

The fact that you and I have molested children does not mean that we did so for *exactly* the same reasons, although there can be similarities. But we do share something very critical to this whole issue of thought pattern—a cycle to our thoughts and behaviors.

As a very simple example, we generally eat when we are hungry and sleep when we are tired, but eating and sleeping are common responses which we all share. What people do when they get angry, for example, is not so universal. Some stuff the anger, some react in a responsible fashion, and some fly into an uncontrollable rage. Sheer repetition of any response strengthens the probability of acting in that fashion each time anger is experienced.

For many of us, sexual behavior became our response to all sorts of issues that were in and of themselves non-sexual, much the same, I would guess, as alcohol is used by others as a solution to their problems and issues. Eventually, the choice (sex, alcohol, etc.) takes on a life of its own, demanding fewer and fewer reasons until the behavior itself becomes *the* goal and not a solution.

What Can You Do?

I am not going to write this in any order of importance, nor will this be an attempt to replace the work of many far more knowledgeable than myself. What I want to share is what has been working for me, and as they say, use what works for you and discard or set aside the rest.

Self-Identity is Critical!

How I see and define myself often determines the choices I make when I experience those unwanted thoughts. I know there are clinical definitions for what I have done, but I have found that saying “I am Bob and I struggle *with* . . .” is far different than saying, “I am Bob and I *am* a <name of sin behavior>.”

The identity I believe God had for me (and for you) at the moment of birth did not include a word like “molester.” So if I have assumed that word as an appropriate description of my being or of who I am, then I can hope for little in the way of change.

If, on the other hand, I see change as focusing on what I am supposed to be as a man, while at the same time recognizing my *potential* for repeating the evils I have committed, then my choices can be more clearly seen as right or wrong, favoring the new man or relapsing into the behaviors of the old.

What’s Happening?

When assaulted by some image I know is inappropriate, I often ask myself, “What’s *this* all about?” The question is something of a caution light and gives me that very important moment where I think through the choice I am about to make—reject the image or indulge in it. This “moment” will not be very great if one is heavily into addictive behavior patterns.

At one time, my own behaviors were highly addictive with very little time between the experience of a thought and a behavioral response. Experts note that the brain creates chemicals reinforcing behavior with every repetition. While it might not be possible to completely eliminate those original chemicals, I have learned that I can override the old by establishing new chemicals. This is, I think, the basis behind behavioral modification.

As mentioned earlier, prison is a forced separation from potential victims for a child molester. Many inmates, myself included, felt that the problem of inappropriate attraction to children had disappeared or at least significantly diminished after a period of time spent in prison. Our thinking was simple: No available victim, no molestation. But the reality was that there *were no children around*.

When I made up my mind that I had some serious flaws in my thinking, I became determined to do something about them. One conclusion I came to was that I had to be realistic about inappropriate fantasies. Simply wanting them to disappear did not mean they would.

A New Way?

Some of you have heard this story before, but it set in motion a difference in the way I handled fantasy. Maybe it will for you as well.

At a gathering of relatives, my sister-in-law pointed out that my shoelaces were incorrectly tied—the loops did not fall evenly across the shoe from left to right, but hung at a weird angle. She asked me to tie my shoes, and she pointed out as I did so where I was in “error.” It all seemed stupid at first, but I followed her directions and found the loops of each shoelace hung just as they were meant to hang.

The down side to the whole exercise was that the new process “felt” awkward and even a bit unnatural. I liked the look, however, so I decided to hang in there with the new system. It wasn’t long before tying my shoes the “old” way

was just as uncomfortable as the “new” way had been the first time I tried it.

This experiment led to changing the way I did other equally simple tasks. Whatever way I did something before, I looked to see if there was another way to do the same thing. I learned that many everyday tasks (putting on socks or shoes, for example) were done in the same sequence each time (left-right, right-left, down-up, etc). By reversing the starting direction, I experienced that uncomfortable feeling—at least for a time. It wasn’t the process of doing something a new way that made a difference, but that in order to even start, I had to *think first and then act*.

Through these exercises, I began to feel some control in my decision-making process, and found that this “*moment of thought*” could be directly applied to how I dealt with fantasy.

The point here is not that the temptations disappear but that there is a definite window of opportunity now existing which allows me to make healthier choices.

A Positive Approach to Things

I once thought that the way to beat temptation was to be so busy that I didn’t have time for it. Wrong. That system only made me so tired that when I was faced with temptation, I didn’t have the strength to withstand it.

My life is busier now than I’d like it to be, but there is a positive energy to what is happening. The boundaries I set are still in place; my relationships with others are appropriate relationships; and my faith in God binds everything together. Remember that prayer IS critical to the battle, for communication with God reinforces the image God has of me as well as the direction He wants me to face.

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean.

Jesus made forgiveness possible for me and you by His death on the cross. We have been forgiven! What remains is for us to be willing to set aside the old in favor of the new—no matter how difficult that might be. Will there be an end to temptation and fantasy? No. A new life? Most definitely, so hang in there and believe that it will happen.

2019

I hear from individuals who admit to those in authority that they still have the kind of temptation that led to their offenses. Rather than ask how they dealt with the thoughts, they were advised that they still needed more treatment. The unspoken goal, it seems, is to have no temptations at all because that would prove their efforts in treatment were successful. What they are left with, however, is a sense of shame and guilt.

When Paul wrote of begging God to remove his ‘thorn,’ God’s response was “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12.9) God wanted Paul to call on Him in those moments of weakness and that’s what God wants of us.

I understand. None of us wants to return to the choices we made in the past, so it is natural to want complete freedom from any sinful thoughts. But temptation is not sin. It is an invitation to sin. We *do* have a choice whether or not to say yes. God bless you in your choice!

“Wash me, Lord, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

Bits & Pieces

The following are taken from letters I have received since the last issue of this newsletter. Some are meant to offer hope and encouragement while others call out for us to be in prayer.

I am glad to know the ministry is going well. I love to share *Into the Light* with men here. [Thank you!]

God does not need us to ask for blessing (“God bless our food, our lives, our family”) because He has already blessed us by allowing us to live to see another day. He would much rather hear us thank Him for everything because everything belongs to Him anyway. Perhaps we ought to take some time to listen to Him speak rather than expect God to listen to us.

Please pray for us to get a full-time chaplain. There are staff here who are therapists for treatment of the mind, staff who are here for recreational activities for the body, but no hired professional for the spiritual side of us. God always seems to be shoved out of state programs.

God is not necessarily concerned with our skill set. He prizes our character, our love for Him, and our willingness to trust Him. When these qualities are being developed inside us by the Holy Spirit, He can use us in big or small ways to accomplish His will on earth.

Loneliness is not the absence of people. It is the absence of intimacy. Loneliness doesn't come from being alone but from feeling alone.

Your days that are your worst are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of God's grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the need of God's grace. (Jerry Bridges, author)

My entire life I never felt loved by anyone. Now that I discovered the pure love of Jesus, I discovered that love is not produced by feelings or emotions, but by choice. I guess that I chose to care and love you because of the care and love you have shown for me.

Man says, “Show me and I'll trust you.”
God says, “Trust me and I'll show you”
Psalm 126.6



Our Prayer Corner

Prayer is an incredible gift we can give one another, for there is no better thing than to lift our lives, hopes, and dreams to the altar of the Lord.

Let us pray . . .

- First and always foremost, for our victims, that each day for them is a new day, a day without fear, and a day of healing.
- For those who feel overwhelmed by temptation, that they find supportive connections willing to encourage them in making God-centered choices.
- For those who walk in shame, that they come to know Jesus has already cleared away the darkness and is offering the light of his presence.
- For those who allow others to define them, that they realize that God has already done so at the moment of their birth – He has called them!
- For those who feel the journey ahead is too difficult, that they believe that they don't walk it alone, for God has given us all the Holy Spirit to dwell in our lives.
- For churches tempted to define and reject us, that they look first at what God has done for them, that loving forgiveness and presence is meant to be shared.
- For the families and friends of victims, that they find a way to see the future of healing and not as a bondage to the abuse that happened.
- For family and friends of offenders, that they remember the importance of connection.
- For Bob's health, that the ministry God has for him will continue to be an encouragement and hope for others.
- For this ministry, that Broken Yoke Ministries continues to be blessed with the financial support needed to meet basic expenses like this newsletter.
- Finally, for those who are still abusing and are reading this newsletter because God made that possible, that they will do whatever it takes to stop the cycle of abuse and harm caused to their victims.

Your Support Matters

Please consider financially supporting this ministry. *Into the Light*, a newsletter unlike any other, is made possible solely by your donations. Send contributions to

Broken Yoke Ministries
PO Box 5824
De Pere, WI, 54115-5824.

All donations are tax deductible and will be acknowledged. If you are unable to support this effort financially, please support it with your prayers. For those of you able, consider your Amazon purchases using Smile.Amazon and selecting Broken Yoke Ministries as your designation.

To change from what we were to what we hope to be requires us to recognize the 'what' in us that needs to be changed

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A Little Humor...

A man walks into a bar and sits down. He asks the bartender, "Can I have a cigarette?" The bartender replies, "Sure, the cigarette machine is over there." So he walks over to the machine and as he is about to order a cigarette, the machine suddenly says, "Oi, you bloody idiot." The man says with surprise in his voice, "That's not very nice." He returns to his bar stool without a cigarette and asks the bartender for some peanuts. The bartender passes the man a bowl of peanuts and the man hears one of the peanuts speak, "Ooh, I like your hair." The man says to the bartender, "Hey, what's going on here? Your cigarette machine is insulting me and this peanut is coming on to me. Why's this?" The bartender replies, "Oh, that's because the machine is out of order and the peanuts are complementary."

